



Factors Impacting Provisioning of Learner Textbooks in Tshwane North District Schools, Gauteng Province, South Africa

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How to cite this paper: Mabula, M.J., Khalabai, M.E. and Simeon, M. (2023) Factors Impacting Provisioning of Learner Textbooks in Tshwane North District Schools, Gauteng Province, South Africa. *Open Access Library Journal*, **10**: e9523. <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1109523>

Received: November 4, 2022

Accepted: January 9, 2023

Published: January 12, 2023

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Abstract

In line with the National Norms and Standards for School Funding, the Education Ministry in the country allocates annually a large percentage of the financial resources to disadvantaged schools. However, literature indicates that many schools, particularly the historically disadvantaged ones, continue to function without adequate textbooks. Hence, this paper sets out to investigate the factors impacting the acquisition and provisioning of learner textbooks in schools. Qualitative research was employed. Three ($n = 3$) schools were purposively sampled based on the learner textbook reports submitted to the District Office. From each school, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with five participants. Data analysis revealed that participating schools are characterized by chronic shortages of learner textbooks. We argue that the inadequacy of textbooks in schools is caused by inadequate state funding, the procurement and management process which make schools prone to wasteful and fruitless expenditure, and the inability of schools to retrieve textbooks from learners. We recommend that the state funding model to schools should be flexible to cover all the admitted learners in schools, and education authorities must ensure that schools comply with proper stock management and procurement process.

Subject Areas

Educational Management

Keywords

Textbooks, Procurement, Stocktaking, Distribution, Learner Performance

1. Introduction

The South African Constitution included a Bill of Rights with an education

clause, which states that everyone has the right to basic education, including adult basic education that the state must make available and accessible (RSA, 1996) [1].

While access to education has been a success in the country, many schools, particularly the historically disadvantaged ones, continue to function without adequate resources. The inadequacy of the resources includes buildings, equipment, furniture, laboratories, libraries, computer labs, and more particularly textbooks as core teaching and learning support material (Veriava, 2017) [2]. Studies have been conducted on the provision of resources to schools. However, the body of knowledge that emerged focused largely on the funding of the education sector, characterized by huge resource disparities with 75% of schools poorly resourced. There is a paucity of research on resource provisioning to schools in the form of textbooks. Our investigation centered on the following question: What are the factors affecting the acquisition and provision of textbooks to learners? For this question, we set out to investigate the factors affecting the inadequate textbook provisioning in schools, and to come up with measures that can enhance textbook acquisition and provisioning at a school level.

We conducted our study in three (3) no-fee secondary schools in the Tshwane North District of Hammanskraal and Soshanguve area in Gauteng Province. Like other townships in the country, Hammanskraal and Soshanguve areas are characterized by poverty, unemployment, overcrowding, and child-headed families. It was our intention to investigate and understand the phenomenon of textbook acquisition and provisioning within a disadvantaged community.

2. Literature Review

Various factors affect textbook acquisition and provision to learners such as funding, roles of stakeholders, curriculum change, procurement processes, and management of textbooks.

2.1. Funding

Section 21.1(c) of the South African School Act (SASA, 1996) [3] stipulates that public schools receive school funding (allocation) from the government that must be used to procure textbooks and other education resources. The funding received by the schools does not cover costs for new buildings and the payment of salaries, which remain centralized in the education department.

The National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSSF), which were implemented in 2000 (Mestry & Ndhlovu, 2014) [4], led to the redistribution of public funds from previously advantaged schools to formerly under-resourced schools, resulting in more funding for schools in disadvantaged communities (DoE, 2003) [5].

Schools in our country are divided into five categories or quintiles—quintile 1 to 5—according to their poverty ranking. Schools that are under quintile 1 to 3 receive more state funding and do not charge school fees because they are si-

tuated within disadvantaged communities. Schools in quintiles 4 and 5 are fee-paying and receive less funding from the government because such schools are considered wealthy (Thenga, 2012) [6].

Pillay (2006a) [7] argues that post-1994; the substantial increase in public funding for formerly disadvantaged schools has still not been adequate to address all the costs of providing education. Pillay (2006a) [7] found that the inadequacy of funding has led some schools that manage their own budgets, to spend money allocated for learning support materials on other much-needed items and run out of money for textbooks. Studies found that the Provincial Education Department's capacity to implement and monitor the funding policy was dysfunctional (Jansen & Amsterdam, 2006 [8]; Maile, 2013 [9]; Mashaba & Maile, 2021 [10]), hence the Department of Education cannot directly censure schools that fail to manage their teaching resources adequately (Pillay, 2006b) [11].

The Schools Act (1996) [3] stipulates the responsibility of all public schools governing bodies (SGBs) to do their best to improve the quality of education by raising funds to supplement the school allocation. Mpolokeng (2017) [12] and Mashaba and Maile (2021) [10] allude that disadvantaged schools face challenges regarding fundraising due to lack of financial knowledge and skills in fundraising projects. The inability to raise additional funding is detrimental to the acquisition of teaching and learning resources, in particular textbooks, which in turn impact negatively on teaching and learning.

2.2. Admission Pressure

Section 29 of SASA (1996) [3] gives the school governing body (SGB) powers to determine the admission policy. However, the authority to determine the enrolment capacity of the school is determined by the Department of Education (DoE, 1996) [3].

Gauteng Province is an economic hub of the country and attracts people from other provinces in search of economic opportunities. Mestry (2017) [13] purports that public schools in Gauteng Province, particularly townships schools, are overcrowded as district offices instruct principals and SGBs to admit learners even though the schools are over-subscribed.

The migration pattern puts pressure on admissions, especially in no-fee public schools, as they are forced to admit extra more learners in January of each year for whom no funding provision was made.

Government calculates the school allocation based on the number of learners in the school in the previous year, and the socio-economic status of the school communities (DoE, 2004) [14]. Forced over-enrolment of learners adds severe strain on the already inadequate funding for educational resources, and in particular textbooks (Ntuta & Schurink, 2010) [15]. The funding mechanism to schools needs to be flexible to accommodate all the admitted learners. Lack of flexibility (Mashaba & Maile, 2021) [10] in the school allocation model, result in a build-in inefficiency mechanism in funding disadvantaged schools, and hence,

perpetuate the inadequacy of the resources such as textbooks in the schools. Phakathi (2015) [16] argues that the provision of a nutrition programme in no-fee schools has led to overcrowding in most schools, which creates a shortage of textbooks and other educational resources.

2.3. Textbook Costs

The Department of Education (DoE, 2003) [5] posits that the high cost of textbooks contributes to the rising cost of education, due to lack of competition in the production of textbooks, inappropriately high-quality standards, and costs relating to distribution. It is estimated that the price of textbooks could be lowered by 20% if lower grade paper is used and formats standardized (Pillay, 2006a) [7]. Pillay (2006b) [11] suggestions to cost effectiveness in relation to textbooks include making books last longer and eliminating value-added tax (VAT) on textbooks.

2.4. Role of School Governing Body

The School Governing Body (SGB) is responsible to ensure that School Learning and Teaching Support Materials Committees are established and chaired by a member of the SGB who is a parent (GDE, 2018) [17]. SASA (1996) [3] outlines one of the allocated SGB functions as purchasing textbooks, educational materials, and equipment (Xaba, 2011) [18].

SGBs are expected to develop a school Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM) policy that is aligned to the provincial LTSM policy (GDE, 2018) [17] that would ensure proper procurement procedure and sound stock management of the textbooks and other resources. Better procurement and preservation of textbooks and other assets at schools could be easily achieved through development of tighter policy (Report to the Minister, 2003) [5]. However, Kumalo (2009) [19] points out that SGBs are challenged by policymaking and implementation.

2.5. Curriculum Change

The post-apartheid government introduced an era of educational reform since 1994. The first version of the new curriculum for the General Education and Training (GET) band, known as curriculum 2005 (C2005) was introduced in 1997 (Taole, 2013) [20]. The intent was to phase in the curriculum progressively so that it would cover all grades of schooling by 2005 (Harley & Wedekind, 2004) [21]. In 1999, Curriculum 2005 was reviewed (Taole, 2013) [20]. The reviews led to the introduction of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in 2002, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) in 2007, and the current Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), which was introduced in 2012. All the changes were tried and followed in South Africa within a period of fifteen years (Adu & Ngibe, 2014) [22]. Textbooks have had to be procured for these ever-changing curricula. Instead of merely topping up the existing stock of textbooks, schools have had to start afresh in procuring the text-

books required for the new curriculum (Mohlala, 2015) [23]. Cycles of curriculum reviews, which are accompanied by the procurement of new textbooks, puts pressure on the constrained budget of the disadvantaged schools and makes it difficult for the schools to reach textbooks saturation.

2.6. Management of Textbooks

Schools should effectively manage textbooks and other resources to prolong their lifespan and ensure optimal usage (Phakathi, 2015) [16]. Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) stipulates that the recommended lifespan of textbooks is five years (GDE, 2018) [17]. The quality and duration of educational resources is affected by the way these resources are looked after, and the ways in which they are serviced and repaired in their lifespan (Phakathi, 2015) [16]. If textbooks are not well-stored at school and the loaned books to learners are not covered and well taken care of by the custodians, the lifespan of the textbooks will be at risk and the available quantity of textbooks will be compromised. Effective management of textbooks would serve as an investment, as schools will only procure top-ups of textbooks as per increased enrolment figures.

2.7. Procurement Processes

The following are procurement processes to be followed by all public schools in Gauteng Province (GDE, 2018) [17]:

Needs analysis and stock taking

The point of departure in terms of procurement processes is a needs analysis (GDE, 2018) [17]. This is the process where the school compiles a list of all the required learning and teaching support materials, including textbooks needed for effective teaching and learning to take place.

Monitoring of resources entails effective stocktaking, which informs the school about the available stock of textbooks at the institution (Mohono, 2010) [24]. The SGB is required to monitor the stock register (inventory records) of all LTSM available in the school, and to ensure that proper stocktaking is done at the school level (GDE, 2018) [17]. Proper stocktaking and needs analysis is essential because the process enable the schools to guard against wasteful and fruitless expenditure, as schools will not procure what they already have in stock.

2.7.1. Textbooks Requisitioning

The School LTSM Committee (SLTSMC) is required to submit the list of textbooks needed to service providers for quotations and bids to supply the required stock (GDE, 2018) [17]. To avoid supplier favoritism, it is recommended that a minimum of three quotations must be obtained from different suppliers. This process will ensure that the SGB appoints a supplier who will provide the textbooks at a favorable cost (Viljoen, 2011) [25].

The SGB should draft a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the appointed service provider and the agreement should be aligned with the requirements of the GDE SLA. Once that is done, it means requisitioning has commenced.

The ability of the schools to appoint suppliers provides an opportunity for negotiating better prices and obtaining substantial discounts. SGBs must receive regular reports on the procurement and delivery of all LTSM to ensure that the ordered textbooks are delivered on time.

2.7.2. Delivery and Storage

To ensure that the required stock of textbooks is received by the schools, the proof of delivery (POD) must be signed by both the service provider and the person who has been duly appointed by the principal and the school LTSM Coordinator to receive the consignment. It is imperative that the consignment is verified by checking the delivery note against the requisition form and physically check the delivered textbooks (GDE, 2018) [17].

All textbooks procured must be stamped, numbered, and recorded in the school's stock register that must be regularly updated. The consignment must be safely kept in a storeroom under the care of the storeroom manager (GDE, 2018) [17]. Effective stock management should control the use of stock, so that misuse and theft are eliminated and to ensure that enough stock is available when needed (Mngoma, 2009) [26]. However, the Report to the Minister (DoE, 2003) [5] states that a lack of proper storage facilities and inadequate asset management control, including asset registers, in many schools impacts negatively on textbook availability, and increase the cost of education.

2.8. Distribution of Textbooks

On the first day of school, institutions must distribute textbooks to learners (GDE, 2018) [17]. The benefit of allowing pupils to keep books for the year is that it supports learning, particularly among poorer children (Taylor, 2008) [27].

In terms of distribution of textbooks to learners, it is important that there must be record of the distribution in the form of loan forms. Loan forms should be signed by learners and most importantly, parents, as they are responsible for replacing lost textbooks (GDE, 2018) [17].

2.9. Textbook Retention and Retrieval

The School LTSM Coordinator is required to ensure that quarterly audits and annual retrievals are conducted on all distributed textbooks, and reports are submitted to Districts as per Provincial and District Retention and Retrieval Management Plans (GDE, 2018) [17]. The purpose of the quarterly audits is to early detect and immediately inform the parents about any lost books, and to summon the parent to replace the textbook(s), either by purchasing the book or by paying the monetary value of the textbook as per Circular S1 of 2019 (GDE, 2021) [28].

Annual retrieval is a process where books are retrieved from learners after each subject's final examination in the fourth term of the school calendar. District offices are required to support schools to ensure 100% retrieval rate of textbooks (GDE, 2018) [17].

According to Phakathi (2015) [16], although schools have textbooks retrieval programmes in place, schools are not successful in retrieving all textbooks from learners at the end of the year. Literature confirms that most parents cannot afford to pay to replace the lost textbook, especially in no-fee schools (Phakathi, 2015 [16]; Taylor, 2008 [27]).

Taylor (2008) [27] affirms that schools that do have effective textbook retrieval processes academically perform significantly better than those that do not.

3. Theoretical Framework

Frederick Taylor's efficiency theory stipulates that management and employees in an institution have the responsibility to ensure that the work is performed according to the system developed. The theory emphasise excellent output yielded from effective management in institutions. We investigated factors impacting on the acquisition and provisioning of learner textbooks, with reference to schools in Tshwane North District in the Gauteng Province, South Africa. Frederick Taylor's efficiency theory provides a useful lens to unpack the factors impacting textbooks provisioning to learners, because the acquisition and provisioning of books to learners is a management process in schools within the LTSM guidelines given to schools by the education department.

4. Research Methodology

Qualitative research was employed in the study to investigate factors impacting the provision of learner textbooks in no-fee secondary schools. A case study approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth study in which the researchers can systematically gather enough information about a particular social setting or event, and thus permit the researchers to effectively understand how the phenomenon operates or functions (Berg, 1998) [29]. We followed research ethics protocol and the study was approved by research ethics committee without which education authorities would have been reluctant to allow us to visit schools. A sample of three ($n = 3$) schools was purposively sampled, influenced by the notion that they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem to the central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2008) [30]. The three schools were selected based on the learner textbook universal coverage reports submitted to District LTSM office. Universal coverage means every learner must be provided with a textbook for each subject the learner is enrolled. From the submitted reports, two schools with the lowest learner textbook universal coverage percentages, and one school with a comparatively better performance in universal coverage, were selected. From each participating school, one Deputy Principal who is a School Learning and Teaching Support Materials (SLTSM) Coordinator, one Departmental Head, one teacher, one administrative assistant (AA) who are members of the SLTSM Committee, and one SGB parent who is the chairperson of the SLTSM Committee participated in the study, and data was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The total

number of participants was fifteen.

5. Findings

The findings are presented according to the hermeneutic steps of data analysis. Participants are categorized as follows: School A participants: school LTSM coordinator of school A (SLTSMCA), Departmental Head A (DHA), teacher A (TA), administrative assistant A (AAA) and SGB A (SGBA). School B participants: school LTSM coordinator of school B (SLTSMCB), Departmental Head B (DHB), teacher B (TB), administrative assistant B (AAB) and SGB B (SGBB). School C participants: school LTSM coordinator of school C (SLTSMCC), Departmental Head C (DHC), teacher C (TC), administrative assistant C (AAC) and SGB C (SGBC).

5.1. LTSM Policy

Participants from different schools agreed to be in possession of Provincial policy. Interviewees cited the following regarding the status of School LTSM policy:

Participant SLTSMCA: *“Our school LTSM policy is not signed by the District Director. We have since submitted an original copy to District LTSM office and it was never returned to us”*.

We found that schools are in possession of Provincial LTSM Policy and School LTSM policies. The Provincial LTSM policy states that school LTSM policies must be ratified by the District Director (GDE, 2018) [17]. However, data analysis suggests that the school LTSM policies are not approved by the district office.

The interview analysis indicates that the composition of the School LTSM Committees complies with the Provincial policy.

In terms of policy development, the responses provided by participants posit that the SGBs have limitations in policy development. Interviewees mentioned the following:

Participant SGBA said, *“The SLTSM Committee develops the policy and submits to the SGB for approval”*.

The finding of the study supports Xaba (2011) [18] that SGBs are faced with difficulties in policy development, formulation, and implementation.

We found that the main policy objectives of the participating schools are to provide textbooks to all learners and to have 100% retrieval of textbooks loaned to learners. However, data analysis indicates that schools are incapable of achieving their policy objectives. Participants mentioned the following:

Participant TC: *“Our objective is to ensure that all learners receive textbooks, and it is still work in progress, we hope that in future, all learners will have textbooks”*.

Participant AAB: *“We are still striving to provide all learners with textbooks and 100% textbook retrieval”*.

The interview finding is in line with literature, which states that no-fee schools

are still characterised by the shortage and poor retrieval of textbooks (Phakathi, 2015) [16].

We found that schools follow policy on textbook expenditure, and interviewees indicated that the ring-fenced state allocation for textbooks is spent on learner textbooks.

We found that the District does not provide training to SGBs.

SGBB: *“There is no District training received by the SGB. The coordinator escalates the training through to me in a one-on-one session”*.

The analysis revealed that LTSM training by District is not provided to the entire School LTSM Committee members, only some training is provided to the LTSM Coordinator, who is thus expected to pass on the knowledge to other members of the committee.

All participants mentioned that parents are involved in the acquisition and provision of learner textbooks.

SGBB: *“As an SGB parent representative, I work hand in hand with the school LTSM coordinator in all the LTSM procurement processes”*.

The above analysis reflects an active parental involvement in the acquisition of learner textbooks, which is in line with the school LTSM policy, which stipulates (GDE, 2018) [17] that the SGB is responsible for the approval of the learning and teaching support materials needs of the schools.

5.2. Procurement Process

We found that all participating schools are in possession of the Current Actual RTT budget allocation certificate, which indicate the amount of money that the school must spend in procuring learner textbooks. However, data analysis indicates that the budget allocation for textbooks by education authorities is inadequate.

Participant SLTSMCB: *“The school allocation for textbooks is not enough”*.

SLTSMCA: *“The budget allocation is inadequate since it is not worked out based on the actual current learner enrolment e.g., our entry grade currently has six hundred and eighty (680) learners, and we are expecting nine hundred (900) learners in the following year and the budget by the department will be based on 680 learners. Fundraising is a small amount that cannot procure textbooks”*.

The above analysis indicates that due to admission pressure, the state funding for textbooks does not match the current actual learner enrolment, because the formula used by the state to calculate the school allocation is based on learner enrolment of the previous year. Data analysis suggests that many learners are admitted at the beginning of the year; however, they are not funded by the school allocation. We also found that schools lack the capacity to use fundraising to finance learner textbooks.

The analysis found that before the procurement of learner textbooks, schools conduct a needs analysis and stock taking which is a good practice by the participating schools.

SLTSMCC: *“We conduct needs analysis to know what to procure. Teachers submit their needs to departmental heads. The departmental heads consolidate their departmental needs then submit them to me. I work hand in hand with the administrative assistant and the departmental heads to ensure that stocktaking against the needs is done to avoid duplication. The needs will then be submitted to the SGB for approval”.*

Conducting a need analysis and stocktaking before purchasing textbooks indicates good practice because the process enables the schools to avoid fruitless and wasteful expenditure.

All schools indicated that they compare prices before selection and appointment of service providers. This finding suggests that schools employ the cost-benefit in the procurement of textbooks.

Participant DHA: *“Prices are compared, and we buy at competitive prices”.*

All participants mentioned that there is compliance in terms of Service Level Agreement development and relevant supporting documents. Below is a response of a participant:

SLTSMCA: *“Upon SGBs appointment of the service provider, a service level agreement is entered into with the appointed service provider. The service provider is also presented with the requisition for order”.*

The above analysis suggests that schools comply with LTSM policy where the Service Level Agreement is signed by the schools and the service providers.

We found that textbooks are prioritized and given the biggest budget allocation. All the funds allocated for learner textbooks are used to purchase textbooks by the schools participating in the study.

Schools were found to follow the proper procedure when the purchased textbooks are delivered. On receipt of the consignment, the type and quantity of the textbooks are verified, and then the books are stamped, numbered, recorded in the stock register, and kept in a storeroom.

Participant SLTSMCA: *“LTSM representatives receive the consignment, conduct verification by counting stock received against the order form. Textbooks are stamped, numbered, and placed in the storeroom until distribution”.*

5.3. Management of Learner Textbooks

We found that schools lack proper storerooms but utilize what they have available as access-controlled storage. Lack of proper storage facility has a negative impact on the lifespan of textbooks (DoE, 2003) [5]. Below are responses from participants:

SGBA: *“After realising that the library is redundant, we converted it into an LTSM storeroom. It has a steel door and is safe. One of the departmental heads is a storeroom manager and is assisted by a teacher to control access into the storeroom. We have also appointed a security company and there are motion sensors installed”.*

SGBC: *“We have converted a library to a storeroom. Not everyone can access the storerooms except me, the principal, the school LTSM coordinator, and the*

administrative assistant".

The above analysis also suggests that the participating schools do not have functioning libraries. The research finding is in line with the Report to the Minister (DOE, 2003) [5], which stated that only 30% of schools have proper LTSM storerooms.

Data analysis indicate that participating schools have distribution plans to give textbooks to learners; however, there is no uniformity in terms of a distribution model in schools.

Participant SGBA: *"In terms of distribution, a management plan is developed. The storeroom manager issues textbooks to departmental heads who then distribute them to teachers then teachers distribute them to learners"*.

DHA: *"The school LTSM committee distributes textbooks to learners as per the management plan developed"*.

In issuing textbooks to learners, policy requires schools to use textbooks loan forms, which are provided by the education department, and the loan form must be signed by the parents, which represent a liability on the part of the parent to replace lost or damaged textbooks. However, we found that the loan forms used by the schools to distribute textbooks to learners were not signed by the parents.

Participant SLTSMCB: *"Textbooks are issued to learners. Class lists are used for recordkeeping and are only signed by learners for acknowledgement of receipt"*.

Data analysis revealed that textbook stock registers are not regularly updated.

Participant SGBA: *"The stock register is not updated; there is no previous record in terms of stock available. This is work in progress"*.

The finding that schools do not have updated textbooks stock registers indicate a lack of compliance to the policy stipulation that all LTSM must be recorded in the stock register that is regularly updated (GDE, 2018) [17].

We found that schools conduct a universal coverage audit, quarterly retentions, and annual textbook retrieval and reports are submitted to the district office.

AAB: *"We develop a plan that is in line with the district plan to conduct universal textbook coverage audit, quarterly retentions, and annual retrieval of textbooks"*.

Participant TC: *"The textbook shortages are a result of loss due to negligence, theft amongst learners and school leavers. Our plan is to make parents pay for lost textbooks, but we are not succeeding in this regard"*.

We found that schools were not retrieving all the textbooks that have been loaned to learners. The inability of the parents to replace the lost and damaged textbooks was found to compound the problem of textbook shortages in the schools.

Participant AAB: *"Textbook retrieval and replacement is not at 100%. Parents are requested to replace the lost textbooks by either making a payment or buying the book on their own. I know of less than three parents who agreed to pay for textbooks lost by their children, the rest of the parents claim that they have no*

money to replace the books'.

Digital data capturing on textbooks inventory allows schools to share learner textbook data with the district, and allows the district, as per the endeavor of the department of education to monitor, support, and ensure that all learners are provided with textbooks (GDE, 2018) [17].

We found that the school LTSM coordinator and administrative assistant are the only stakeholders working with LTSM electronic data templates provided by District LTSM unit. Data analysis suggests a lack of adequate training on electronic data and analysis of textbooks inventory.

Participant SLTSMCC: *“What usually happens is that orientation on the use of templates is given when attending District trainings. The challenge comes when we are given a template that was not projected in the training. In such cases we call for support and the officials always assist”*.

The Schools Act (SASA, 1996) [31] requires the SGB to be in control of the resources of the schools; however, data analysis indicates a lack of support to the SGB by the District LTSM officials.

Participant SGBA: *“The SGB has not received training from District. I only hear that they have called to request submissions. Their visibility is limited”*.

Training and support to schools are likely to enhance the effective management of textbooks and improve the provisioning of books to learners.

We found no plans for SLTSM Committee meetings; hence, schools do not hold meetings according to policy, which stipulate that the SLTSMC must convene meetings at least twice per term (GDE, 2018) [17].

Participant AAA: *“Minutes of meetings are recorded and kept but there is no management plan developed. Meetings are held as the need arises”*.

5.4. Textbooks Availability in Schools

We found that the shortage of textbooks in participating schools is caused by learner carelessness, unreliable teachers, and late admissions. The analysis revealed that learners are not taking care of their textbooks, resulting in books being damaged and lost and some learners claim to have lost all textbooks loaned to them.

Participant SLTSMCA: *“Some of the shortages are caused by unreliable teachers who are less committed and do not have records of textbooks loaned to learners”*.

Participant SLTSMCB: *“Some of the teachers tend to turn away learners who return textbooks when they are busy marking during the examination session, and this poses a risk of books not returned to school”*. The Department must hold all stakeholders accountable and responsible for non-retrieval of loaned textbooks. This will assist in bringing an end to textbooks shortages”.

Data analysis suggests that there is a strong drive by schools to ensure adequate textbook provisioning to Grade 11 and 12 learners. Shortages of textbooks are predominantly experienced by the learners in the lower grades of 8, 9, and

10.

Participant SGBB: *“All the learners in grades 11 and 12 are provided with textbooks. There is a shortage of textbooks in grades 8 to 10 textbooks. Grade 10 has the highest enrolment and the highest textbooks shortages”.*

DHC: *“Our shortages are only in senior phase which is Grade 8 and 9. This is because of poor retrieval. In Grade 10 the rate of shortages can be 5%, Grades 11 and 12 does not have shortages at all”.*

In terms of the measures that need to be put in place by the schools to curb textbook shortages, participants mentioned the following: schools must ensure that textbook care is enforced, and learners should cover their books, withholding of progress reports of those learners who fail to return the loaned books, teachers to improve parental involvement and commitment in ensuring that learners take care of the textbooks, and to replace damaged and lost books to engage in more fundraising to supplement the state budget for learner textbooks.

Participant SGBC: *“SGBs must raise funds to augment LTSM funds provided by government. Parents must support their children in ensuring that textbooks are well taken care of and replace lost textbooks as per the textbook recovery system put in place by the school.”*

6. Discussion

The provision of textbooks to learners and allowing them to keep the books for the year supports learning, particularly among poorer learners. Contrary to this endeavor, we found that schools are characterized by the shortage of textbooks. National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSF) have resulted in more state funding to disadvantaged schools (DOE, 2003) [5]. However, we found that the state budget allocated to schools for textbooks is inadequate. The problem of insufficient funding is compounded by the SGBs inability to raise additional resources to supplement the state allocation. The finding of the inability to raise additional funding is in line with literature that schools face challenges with fundraising, due to the lack of financial knowledge and skills in fundraising projects (Mpolokeng, 2017 [12]; Mashaba & Maile, 2021 [10]).

Due to admission pressure from the district office, we found that there are many learners who are admitted by the schools at the beginning of the year, who are not funded by the school allocation. Admitted learners who are not covered by the school allocation put extreme pressure on the already constrained school budget, and perpetuate the problem of textbook shortages in schools. Our finding supports the argument of Ntuta and Schurink (2010) [15] that forced over-enrolment of learners adds severe strain on the already inadequate funding for textbooks.

It was encouraging to find that all the money allocated by the state for the procurement of textbooks was indeed spent by the participating schools on learner textbooks. This finding is contrary to the finding by Pillay (2006) [7] that the inadequacy of state funding has led schools to spend money allocated for

learning support on other needed items, and the school then run out of money for textbooks.

The high cost of textbooks contributes to the rising cost of education (DOE, 2003) [5]. However, we found that schools apply the cost-benefit analysis in the purchasing of textbooks. The application of the cost-benefit analysis suggests that schools procure learner textbooks at competitive prices.

Proper stocktaking, coupled with a regularly updated textbook stock register and needs analysis is essential in the procurement process, because it enable schools to guard against wasteful and fruitless expenditure, as schools will not purchase what they already have in stock (GDE, 2018 [17]; Mohono, 2010 [24]). We found inadequate asset management control due to lack of updated asset registers for textbooks. The lack of proper registers suggests that participating schools are predisposed to wasteful and fruitless expenditure. We also found a lack of proper storage facilities for textbooks. The Report to the Minister (DOE, 2003) [5] stated that the lack of storage facilities is impacting negatively on textbook availability, and it increases the cost of education.

In issuing textbooks to learners, policy requires that the loan forms used to issue textbooks must be signed by parents, which represent a liability on the part of the parents to replace lost or damaged textbooks. However, we found that the loan forms are not signed by the parents. It was not surprising to find unwillingness on the part of the parents to replace damaged or lost textbooks, because parents are not informed of their responsibility towards the school textbooks.

The analysis shows that schools are incapable of retrieving all textbooks loaned to learners, because the books are damaged and lost. Lack of commitment in proper record keeping on the part of teachers was found to be a contributing factor to the non-retrieval of textbooks from the learners. The inability to retrieve learner textbooks severely compounds the problem of textbook shortages in the schools.

Finally, we argue that participating schools are characterized by the chronic shortages of learner textbooks caused by inadequate state funding, the procurement and management process, which leads to wasteful and fruitless expenditure, and the inability of schools to retrieve textbooks from learners.

7. Conclusion

The exposure of educators and learners to textbook shortages can lead to a high learner failure rate and demotivation of both learners and teachers. Funding and the existing practices in participating schools were found to contribute to textbook shortages. We recommend that the state funding model to schools should be flexible to cover all the admitted learners in schools. Education authorities must ensure that schools comply with proper stock management and procurement process. All stakeholders must be held accountable to ensure that textbooks are well taken care of and returned to schools for safekeeping at the end of each academic year.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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